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SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: CROSS-STRAIT RELATIONS, PRESS
FREEDOM

SUMMARY:

11. Taiwan dailies June 3 carried reports on President Chen Shui-bian's intention to meet with China's President Hu Jintao. Pro-unification "United Daily News" carried a banner headline on its front page that read: "Bian Expects to Attend APEC to Meet with Hu Jintao." The banner headline on the front page of the pro-independence "Taiwan Daily" read: "Bian is Willing to Meet Hu Jintao in a Third Country." Both pro-independence "Liberty Times," Taiwan's largest daily, and the pro-status quo "China Times" downplayed the report with placement of coverage of Chen's intention on their inner pages.

12. Most of the editorials and commentaries in the June 3 papers focused on local politics: e.g. tax reform, the National Assembly, etc. The pro-independence "Liberty Times," however, did look across the Taiwan Strait -- its editorial said the Taiwan government should not fall victim to "China fever" and not open the Chinese market to local companies. The pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" also commented on China. Its editorial focused China's violation of press freedom as a violation of human rights.

11. Cross-Strait Relations

A) "[If the Government Insists on] Any More Plans to Proactively Open [to the Chinese Market], Any Measure [to Manage this Trade] Will Be Empty Words."

The pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 800,000] editorialized (6/3):

"One cannot understand [why], when China has legislated the 'Anti-Secession Law,' Taiwan government officials still consider opening the Chinese market to local companies, such as naphtha cracking plants, IC packaging plants, and LCD TFT plants that produce panels under four inches. The officials also plan to enhance the upper limit of the net-value ratio regarding private investments in China, and to identify loosely the qualifications for companies that are funded by Chinese investment. One does not know whether to cry or to laugh at the fact that these officials obviously accept the viewpoints of the unification activists to lean toward China, and to view 'openness' and 'investment in China' as 'appeals for the economy;' and they totally leave behind 'effective management,' one of the seven conclusions reached by the Presidential Office, the Executive Yuan, and the DPP to counter China's 'Anti-Secession Law.'

"We can not agree with Premier Frank Hsieh's statement that 'We can profit from the China fever,' because apparently he sees only the part where merchants could profit, but he ignores the consequent loss to society as well as the country. All that being said, we consider as long as economic officials, the Presidential Office, and the Executive Yuan do not change their wrong thinking, the China fever (in terms of investment) will not be dampened, and the fever will become more serious. Taiwan's economic growth will thus surely decline. ."

12. Press Freedom

B) "Beijing Tramples Rights - Again."

The pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" [circulation: 30,000] editorialized (6/3):

"Many people who hold unrealistic ideas about China often conveniently forget, or consciously choose to turn a blind eye, to its notorious violations of basic civil rights - freedom of the press being just one of them. It should not be forgotten that in China the news media is state-controlled and is essentially a puppet, allowed to parrot government propaganda only.

"If Beijing genuinely wishes to change the impression that it has absolutely no respect for the rule of law and human rights, start by according these detained journalists open and transparent legal due process."

